



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Information

Press Service



RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1929.

WILD-FOWL WELFARE
DISCUSSED BY REDINGTON

Biological Survey Chief Tells Izaak Walton League Convention
about Refuges and Legal Protection of Migratory Birds

Outlining progress in the protection of migratory wild fowl, reporting on developments in conservation during the past year, and commending the present attitude of sportsmen and conservationists generally toward the game laws, Paul G. Redington, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, yesterday (April 19) addressed the national convention of the Izaak Walton League of America, meeting in Chicago.

Commenting on the present tendency to provide sanctuaries for birds, he mentioned the work of the Federal Government to establish refuges at important wild-fowl concentration areas as authorized by the recent Forbeck-Andresen Act for the conservation of migratory birds, and that of the various State and private agencies. Notable among private bird sanctuaries he mentioned the Paul J. Rainey Refuge in Louisiana, now administered by the National Association of Audubon Societies, the bird sanctuary recently established in Florida by Edward Bok about his singing tower, and the islands off the coast of Georgia, owned by prominent men in connection with their winter homes and made refuges for large numbers of the species of waterfowl resident there at that season. He also expressed approval of the movement by some communities to establish waterfowl refuges in cities and other centers of population, such as Lake Merritt, in Oakland, Calif., Lake Winona, at Winona, Minn., and recently proposed refuges in the national capital, about the Tidal Basin, in Potomac Park, Washington, D. C., and in Detroit, Mich., on the Detroit River.

Mr. Redington's address was in the nature of an informal report of the activities and policies of the Biological Survey in relation to the conservation of our migratory birds. He explained briefly the purposes of the various

conservation laws administered by his bureau, such as the Lacey Act of 1900, under which the Department of Agriculture was first authorized to concern itself with game protection, including the regulation of shipment of illegal game in interstate commerce and the importation of foreign species; the migratory-bird treaty act of 1918 and the migratory-bird conservation act of 1929, both of which were passed to make effective the treaty with Great Britain negotiated in 1916 for the protection of birds migrating between the United States and Canada; tariff laws regulating importations of eggs of game birds and the feathers of foreign wild birds; the reservation law of 1916 for the protection of wild life and property on Federal refuges; and the Alaska game law of 1925, under which big game, fur animals, and birds are protected in the Territory. He mentioned the desirability of further effective conservation measures, which he hoped would be taken within the next ten years by negotiating migratory-bird treaties, similar to that with Great Britain, with other countries of North, Central, and South America.

Bird Refuges

Explaining the present and proposed bird refuges throughout the United States Mr. Redington said that the 80 such areas now administered by the Biological Survey have been in the past protected solely under the act of 1916 protecting animals and property on reservations. Many are for big game mammals and for sea birds, but some are important wild fowl centers and two, created by recent legislation--the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and the Bear River (Utah) Refuge--are of primary importance to migratory birds. The new refuge law of 1929, he explained, authorizes the department to acquire additional lands necessary to preserve the habitat of the birds on marsh and water areas now held under private ownership, and authorizes appropriations aggregating nearly \$8,000,000 over the next ten years, \$75,000 of which becomes available on July 1, 1929, for preliminary surveys and investigations of proposed refuges.

"It is necessary before proceeding with the acquisition of lands," Mr. Redington explained, "to make further careful studies, particularly with reference to natural food conditions and land-valuation matters, and our work under the new Act for the coming year will be largely devoted to such essential detail."

Explaining the importance of the proposed refuges for birds other than the waterfowl, Mr. Redington said that "the bulk of the small insectivorous and seed-eating birds, which are of such great importance to agriculture, live in a great variety of habitats, and no particular type of area can be construed as being peculiarly advantageous to them as a group. Marsh areas do have an appeal for these small insectivorous birds, and the establishment of these reservations will have a direct bearing on their welfare. I believe that the refuges to be established under this Act will be fully as important to those interested in the protection of the nongame, song, and insectivorous birds as they are to those who are principally interested in the maintenance of the migratory game birds."

Mr. Redington believes that under the provision of the refuge act that authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to accept gifts of lands, a great impetus will be given to the refuge program if the large number of men of wealth interested in the future of our wild fowl "will seriously consider the conveyance to the Government, by gift, of areas suitable for inviolate refuges, thereby making for themselves a distinguished niche in the annals of true sportsmanship and conservation."

Game Law Enforcement

Although Mr. Redington stressed the importance of providing refuges for birds, he stated it to be of equal importance to protect the wild creatures themselves by means of sensible and reasonable game laws, fully enforced and generally respected, and added that he could not conceive that to develop one project and neglect the other would result in anything but ultimate disappointment and disaster. "There is abundant evidence," he continued, "of an increasing determination on the part of those who shoot and fish to abide by the reasonable restrictions so necessary to govern and control the annual take of wild life for food and sport. Yet in spite of marked progress in this direction we can not anticipate that the time will ever come when it will no longer be necessary to employ police powers to compel the poacher to adhere to those ethical restrictions which the true sportsman, in the absence of such authority, himself imposes voluntarily upon his own acts. I believe that any serious relaxation of the game-law enforcement work by either State or Federal authorities

would be followed by a general resumption of such destructive practices as spring shooting, night shooting, the trapping of game species, and the sale of game, and to an extent that in a very short time would nullify all that we have gained by years of effort."

The speaker reminded his audience that the Biological Survey has funds to employ only 24 full-time United States game protectors. "In this connection," he continued, "let me say that there is no desire or necessity on the part of the Biological Survey to employ an army of game protectors for this purpose. Neither is there any intention on the part of the Federal Government to interfere with or in any degree embarrass the States in their administration of those matters relating to nonmigratory wild life. At the present time we believe that a force of 75 protectors would accomplish all that would be necessary in the enforcement of Federal laws and regulations."

Improving the Habitat of Birds

In addition to providing refuges for birds and enforcing protective laws, Mr. Redington urged the importance of controlling the wild animals that prey upon wild birds and their eggs, combating those maladies of wild fowl through which millions of birds have found death traps where they formerly fed in safety, and curbing the pollution of streams and lakes with the refuse of industrial and densely populated centers. Mention also was made of the importance of planting recommended vegetation for improving ducking waters of all types. "All programs of duck-food planting," Mr. Redington explained, "contribute to the general welfare of wild fowl, for food supply may be the factor controlling survival of the birds under various circumstances. Planting operations carried on for a sufficient length of time in all sections of the country will help to eliminate the bogey of starvation from the future of our wild fowl."

Attitude of Hunters and Conservationists

Commenting on present-day sane attitudes toward wild-life protection, Mr. Redington declared that the future welfare of the migratory waterfowl of the country lies largely in the hands of the hunters. He commended the attitude of the hunter who can see more than a mere bag limit in a day's sport,

and made the plea "for the general acceptance of that attitude of mind that does not contemplate, when one goes afield, primarily a killing process, but rather an appreciation of the good things that nature has donated to man for his delectation and health. A philosophy of this nature, if generally ingrained, will so put to shame the game hog and the poacher that his tribe will diminish, and the future of the wild creatures of the marsh will be made more secure."

Mr. Redington concluded by congratulating the members of the Izaak Walton League on the tangible evidence during the past year of their intent to cooperate heartily with established public agencies, and especially commended their attitude toward other organizations. "The sportsman," he said, "must not ignore the fact that others than himself have rights and interests also in our common heritage of wild life, nor can he fail to acknowledge the debt that progressive conservation owes to that large group of American men and women who desire to protect and perpetuate this resource for the sake of benefits not derived principally through the employment of the gun. Nature lovers, nonshooters, sentimentalist, call them what you will, in the long struggle, not yet completed, to save and increase the remnants of a former abundance for ourselves and those who will come after us, they, too, have given unselfishly, and in a common cause they have borne the burden and heat of the day. The ultimate objective of the wild-life conservation organizations will only be achieved through a continuation of this harmonious effort."

#